DIVINE
CONSIDERATIONS

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DIVINE CONSIDERATIONS UPON

Sin, *Heaven,*
Death, *Affliction,*
Judgment, *Riches,*
Contentation.

By J. H. alsey

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TO

The Right Worſhipful

Sir William Boreman *Knight*,

ONE OF THE

Officers of His Majeſties Honourable

Board of Green-Cloth.

SIR;

INgratitude has been always accounted (by ſober and ingenuous Spirits) the blackeſt of Crimes. And indeed it is a Vice ſo prodigiouſly deteſtable, that its Abettors muſt firſt diveſt Humane Nature, and commence Devils, before they can avow the practice of it. Experience tells us, That the moſt brute and ſavage Creatures may be made tractable by a gentle uſage: But an unthank-

ful Man is so unruly a Monster, that the strongest benefits are too weak to bind him. I hope I shall never exhibit a just occasion to any Person to arraign me for the commission of that barbarous Sin, but more especially to Your self, to whom I am redevable for many signal Civilities. I must needs acknowledge You have indulged both Me and Mine, with such endearing Demonstrations of kindness, that I can never expect to be in a condition capable of requiting them. But it is my continual prayer to the great Father of Mercies, that He will vouchsafe (even in this Life) to discharge those Debts which I am unable to satisfie, and reward You (hereafter) with a plenary fruition of infinite and never-ceasing Felicities.

When I writ the ensuing Considerations, I designed them only for my private use, but presenting them to the perusal of a Gentleman (for

(for whoſe merit I have a more than common Veneration) He did ſo earneſtly importune me to publiſh them, that (in compliance with his deſire) I conſigned them to the Preſs, and have introduced them into the World under the ſhelter of Your protection. I muſt confeſs, I am guilty of no mean confidence in making You the Patron of my impolite Endeavours. But I have had ſo many eminent trials of Your generous Diſpoſition, that I cannot deſpair of a pardon for what I have done; but (on the contrary) humbly perſwade my ſelf, that the ſame Goodneſs, (which has embraced all opportunities of obliging me) will induce You favourably to entertain this little Off-ſpring of a few vacant hours, and to paſs a candid interpretation upon the preſumption of

SIR,

Your moſt obedient Nephew and devoted Servant,

JA. HALSEY.

SIR,

TO THE
READER.

Courteous Reader,

WHEN I reflect upon the excellency of the Christian Religion, the purity of its Doctrine, the reasonableness of its Commands, the inestimable Remunerations it proposes to its Proselytes, and the tremendous Judgments which it denounces against impenitent and final Transgressors; I cannot but admire at the Frenzy of those men, whom no obligation of Duty or Interest can be strong enough to stop in their career to Damnation. Alas! such a horrid Inundation of Impiety has overflowed our British World, that it is now accounted a principal

point of Gallantry to laugh Vertue out of countenance, to Lampoon the Mysteries of our Faith, and to turn into rallery whatever is Sacred and Divine. The Atheist does not only say in his heart there is no God, Psal. 53. 1. *but openly avows his pernicious principles, and publickly scoffs at the notion of that Omnipotent Being, whose very breath is able to blast the wretch into his primitive nothing, or (which is infinitely worse) to tumble him alive into infernal flames. Indeed we are arrived to such a sublimity of prophaneness, that I may justly say with a pious Father of the Ancient Church, that* either the Gospel which we pretend to believe, is not the Gospel of Christ, or else we are no Christians; *so vast a disproportion is there between our profession and our practice, between what we alledge our selves to be, and what we truly are.*

But kind Reader, let me conjure thee to consider, that these ways lead

to.

to the Chambers of Death, *and will certainly end in Destruction. Let us remember that we carry Celestial Jewels in Cabinets of Clay, I mean Immortal Souls in frail and perishable Bodies. Those Angelical Inmates will survive, when the Tenements they inhabit must crumble into forgotten Dust; and they shall continue for ever in a state of bliss or misery. We cannot be ignorant of the instability and brevity of our present life, which* S. James *properly assimilates* (Jam. 4. 14.) to a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. *And holy* Job *compares it to* a Flower *which springs and flourishes, and withers in a day. The brittleness of our Constitution, the frequent knells of melancholy passing-Bells, the doleful groans of our dying Neighbours, and the daily Funerals that pass before our eyes, are Mirrours which sadly represent to us our inevitable Mortality. O! let us be wise on this side the Grave, and* (with fear and trembling)

trembling I prepare for that formidable hour, wherein it will be determined what shall become of us for all Eternity.

In the ensuing Considerations I have succinctly demonstrated the nature and deformity of Sin, the happiness or misery of Death, the terrors of the last Judgment, the joys of Heaven, and the advantages of Affliction; the vanity of Riches, and the felicity of Contentation. May thy perusal of them promote thy comfort here, and contribute to thy Salvation hereafter.

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THE *First Consideration* UPON SIN.

MAN in his original Creation was designed for no less an honour than to enjoy an everlasting communion with his adorable Creator. And to that end, it pleased the Supreme Wisdom to ennoble him with rational and intellectual faculties, whereby he might be able to know, and to love the Author of his happiness. But alas! he was no sooner instated in the Empire of the Universe, and began to exercise an absolute Dominion over the inferior Creatures, but Curiosity and Ambition tum-

bled him from the pinacle of his felicity, and (by complying with the temptation of a seducing Spirit) he immediately forfeited his primitive Integrity, and became *like the Beasts that perish.* O my God! what a strange Confusion did Sin make among the works of thy hands? What a horrid deformity has it spread upon the once-lovely and beautiful face of Nature? It was this prodigious Monster which wrought a Schism in Heaven, fomented a Faction in the very presence of the Deity, and cast millions of the Celestial Powers (from the Regions of Glory) into that dreadful Tophet, *where they are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day,* Jude 1. 6. It was this contagious Viper which drove our first Parents out of *Paradise,* introduced Sorrow, Sickness, and Death into the world; and is the fatal cause of all those miseries which excruciate wretched Humanity. But

But perhaps some will be apt to say, How can it consist with that infinite Goodness which necessarily exists in the Sovereign Being, that for one indirect thought in the Angels, for one transgression in *Adam*, He should plunge the former into Abysses of eternal fire, and inflict upon the latter such grand, such exemplary punishments?

To which I answer, It is certain that the clemency of the Almighty is as unconfined as himself, and his mercy is his most beloved Attribute; but his Justice is equally essential to his Nature, nor can the one be promoted by the violation of the other. The smallest Sin (even in the very Embryo of its conception in the mind) has more venome and malignity in it, than the sufferings of all the Creatures in Heaven and Earth are able to expiate. And if we consider, that the least offence does unspeakably injure the awful Majesty of God, and

extremely dishonours his great and venerable Name; that it is diametrically opposite to his Divine purity, and most detestable to those Sacred Eyes which cannot endure *to behold Iniquity*; Instead of arraigning the severity of his actions, we shall be obliged to exclaim with the Royal Psalmist, *Psal.* 119. 137. *Righteous art thou O Lord! and just are thy Judgments.*

O who can comprehend the inconceiveable sinfulness of Sin! when no less a price than the bloud of the Son of God could ransom us from that formidable Destruction which it deservedly brought upon us. Alas! we (as well as the degraded Seraphims) should have resided amidst the fearful horrors of an intolerable Damnation, if the holy *Jesus* (out of an immensity of love to mankind) had not descended from the bosom of his Father, and (by the inestimable merit of his Death and Passion) reconciled the

Mercy

Mercy and Justice of God, appeased that vengeance which would have triumph'd in our Confusion, and victoriously compleated the astonishing wonder of our Salvation. It was Sin which induced that Prince of Righteousness (*who thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. 2. 6.) to assume the form of a Servant, to array himself with the garments of our Frailty, to endure Hunger, Thirst, Cold, Nakedness, Poverty, and innumerable other miseries in the world, to undergo (with an inimitable patience) the contradictions of sinners, and the derision of his own people the contumacious *Jews*. It was Sin which made him sweat a Sea of bloud in his stupendious Agony, which crowned his tender brows with sharp and pungent Thorns, nailed him to an ignominious Cross, and drew from him this bitter exclamation, *Matth.* 27. 46. *My God, my God, why hast thou*

forsaken me? And now is it possible we can be so prodigiously unthankful for the miraculous work of our Redemption, as to requite *the Lord that bought us* (2 *Pet.* 2. 1.) with a base contempt of his Clemency? Can we forget this unparallel'd production of his kindness, and (by a traiterous confederation) cherish in our very breasts that pernicious Sorceress which subjected him to the most inhumane indignities, and made him expire beneath the direful pressure of inexplicable sufferings?

But if Gratitude (which has an influence upon the most brutish Animals) can have no power to create in us a just sense of our Duty, yet (at least) let the apprehension of our own danger affright us from the embraces of a Serpent, which poisons us in its caresses, and exerts all its charms to flatter us into Ruine. The Oracles of *Truth* infallibly assure us, that while we remain

main the profelytes of fin, we are under the curfe of the Law, and conſequently obnoxious to an everlafting perdition; and can there be a more deſperate hazard than to continue in a ſtate of life, which unleſs we abandon before we come to die, we are ſure to be undone for ever? And alas! how many unexpected accidents may expel the breath out of our Noſtrils, and chaſe our Souls into the unknown Regions of another world? The moſt healthful perſon upon Earth has not the leaſe of one hour to come; neither is he certain when he lies down at night, whether he ſhall live till morning. The leaſt fit of an Ague has ſtrength enough to ſhake us into Duſt and Aſhes. A little Feaver in the bloud is ſufficient to tumble us into our Graves. Nay, (while we are in the height of our prophane mirth and jollity, and think upon nothing leſs than our mortality) the King of Terrors

may surprize us unawares, and drag us to that Adamantine Prison from whence there will be no redemption.

And therefore while we enjoy the invaluable treasure of our present Time (which we can but justly call our own) how nearly does it concern us *to purifie our consciences from dead works*, to break loose from the bonds of *Satan*, and cast off those fetters which enslave us to the ignoble drudgeries of sensuality and wickedness? Who but a mad-man will play with fire, or sleep upon the brink of a precipice? And are not we much more inconsiderate, who dare to trifle in the great business of Repentance, when no less than an Infinity of bliss or wretchedness depend upon the performance or omission of that important action? It is our Interest, as well as our Duty, to reform (with all imaginable expedition) the Errors of our ways, lest our habitual perse-

perſeveration in Sin render us inflexible to the moſt charming invitations of Grace and Mercy; leſt our obſtinate impenitency inforce the Divinity (by turning his patience into fury) to overwhelm us with ſome amazing Judgment, and we become everlaſtingly miſerable.

THE *Second Consideration* UPON DEATH.

THERE is no greater incentive to a holy and religious Converſation, than a practical meditation of our approaching Mortality. *Remember* (ſays *Syracides*, Eccl. 7. 36.) *thy end, and thou ſhalt never do amiſs.* Did we conſider that our head-ſtrong hours poſt away (with an incontroulable carreer) to the Confines of Eternity; that every ſtep we make is a progreſs to thoſe ſolitary Manſions, where we muſt become a prey to Worms and putrefaction; that our Pulſes continually beat a ſolemn march

march to the Grave; that *it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after this the Judgment*, Heb. 9. 27. These serious reflections would awaken us (unless absolutely stupified) out of the Lethargy of our supine transgressions, and excite us so to consult our future preservation, that when the day of our departure should come, we might safely sail over that formidable Ocean, wherein so many millions of improvident wretches do suffer a deplorable shipwrack.

Alas! Can we be unmindful of our frailty, when we carry about us the Elements of corruption? Are not our crazy Bodies composed of Dust, and obnoxious to innumerable Casualties, the least of which is more than sufficient to accomplish their destruction? Is not our inexorable Time perpetually upon the wing? and may not the next minute (for ought we know) close up the scene of our transitory lives?

And

And what a prodigious folly are they guilty of, who misemploy the irrecoverable opportunities of ensuring their pretensions to a glorious Immortality, in a childish pursuit of those insignificant Trifles, which can afford them no comfort in their last and greatest extremities?

One principal difference between a wise man and a fool is, that the former (by a prudent foresight) provides for the entertainment of an unavoidable Danger, while the latter never so much as dreams of the peril, until it involve him in an irremediable Ruine. It is the highest point of wisdom so to live, that we may not be afraid to die; for we our selves give Death his weapons to wound us, and they are our own sins which make him dreadful. *Vertue* and *Innocence* are of proof against his utmost fury, and the decease of a Righteous man is but a Retreat (from a Sea of implacable Tempests) into a blessed Haven of unalte-

unalterable Tranquillity. If a Heathen *Socrates* could smile at the sentence of his unjust Condemnation, and chearfully drink off his Cup of poison in expectation of an imaginary *Elyzium*: With what ecstatical resentments should the true Believer welcome that happy moment, which will put a period to all his temporary tribulations, and introduce him into a real Paradise of pure and sublimated Joys?

I must confess, the bare remembrance of Death is so insupportable to the voluptuous Worldling, that it is like Wormwood in his Bowls of pleasure, and embitters the sweetness of his nobleſt Enjoyments; much more, when that imperious Tyrant shall come (as an Executioner of Divine Justice) to divorce the miserable Caytiff from his hoards of Gold, and large Possessions, from his Dignities and Honours, his Profits and Preferments, and from all those fictitious Felici-

ties.

ties which make up his Heaven in a valley of tears, and hurry him away (without the least commiseration) to endless and insufferable punishments. But while the sensual Epicure (*who has his good things in this life*) trembles at the only thought of his inevitable dissolution, the heroick Christian disdains to fear a vanquished Enemy. He knows that the grand Captain of his Salvation has encountred that King of Terrors in the midst of his own Dominions, and (by dying) gained an illustrious victory. He is fully perswaded, that when his perishable Body must descend to the Chambers of Oblivion, and (in hope of a joyful resuscitation) repose in shrowds of Dust, his immaterial Part will take an immediate flight to those invisible Habitations from whence it came, and (in the embraces of his Saviour) shall possess inutterable satisfactions. *In vain you labour* (said *Basil* to the Emperors Lieute-

Lieutenant, when he threatned him with death) *to terrifie me with that which can but restore me unto him that made me.* Death is now the Porter to admit us into the Gates of the *new Jerusalem*; He is that Path which leads from Servitude to Liberty, from a loathsome Prison to a delectable Palace, and from a world of unspeakable Troubles, to that pacifick Heaven, where the dark night of our momentany sorrows shall terminate in a bright, and eternal Day of Gladness; where we shall shine *like the stars for ever and ever*, *Dan.* 12. 3. and become beauteous Constellations in the Orb of celestial Glory.

Let us therefore (as the Apostle insinuates, *Heb.* 12. 1.) *run with patience the Race that is set before us*, fixing the eyes of our Faith upon that *Crown of Righteousness*, 2 *Tim.* 4. 8. which will be the infinite reward of our finite obedience. And since our abode in this Labyrinth

rinth of Misery, depends upon such apparent incertainties, that we have no assurance of one hour to come; since our life is in our breath, and our breath hovers but in our Nostrils: let us live, as if the next minute were to be our last, and so demean our selves *in all holy conversation and godliness*, 2 *Pet.* 3. 11. that when we have fulfilled the days of our pilgrimage, we may calmly resign our Souls into the hands of a *faithful Creator*, and exchange this transient Life for that durable Immortality, whose enjoyment will render us immutably happy.

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THE
Third Consideration
UPON
JUDGMENT.

IT is a truth confirm'd by a deplorable experience, That the generality of them which bear the glorious name of Christians, and pretend to fight under the standard of the Cross against the Enemies of the *Catholick Faith*, are (by their profligate impieties) the greatest scandal to that illustrious Profession. They live in such a transcendency of wickedness, as if the Son of God came down from Heaven, not to subvert, but to establish the Empire of sin; as if the grand design of their being in this world were only

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to fulfil that ſwiniſh maxim of the licentious Epicure, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we muſt die.* But alas! did theſe practical Atheiſts ſeriouſly remember that there is a Deity (inthron'd above) *who is of purer eyes than to behold Iniquity*, and ſo jealous of his honour, that he will not acquit the leaſt guilt with impunity; could they be perſwaded to devote a few minutes of the Time which they ſquander away in the accompliſhment of their debaucheries, to a ſolemn reflection upon that unavoidable account which will be exacted from them at the general Reſurrection, when not only their words and actions, but the moſt ſecret of their thoughts ſhall be brought to Judgment: It were impoſſible for them (unleſs given over to a final Reprobation) to continue under the Dominion of their carnal Affections. The very apprehenſion of the vengeance to come would

terrifie them into an immediate Repentance, and produce such a miraculous reformation, that (living *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, Tit. 2. 12.) they might be found unblameable in the great Day of the Lord *Jesus*. Ah, what a Day will that be! at whose approach *the Sun shall be turned into darkness, and the Moon into blood*, Acts 2. 20. *When the Heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll*, Isa. 34. 4. *The Elements melt with fervent heat*, 2 Pet. 3. 10. and this admirably beauteous structure of the material Creation must perish in epidemick flames. When the terrible sound of the *last Trumpet* will be loud enough to startle drowsie Mankind out of the sleep of Death, and all those innumerable Infinities of Bodies (which for so many successive Ages have inhabited the vast Territories of Forgetfulness) shall arise from their beds of Dust, and appear before the awful Tribunal of the

great

great and inflexible Judge. The Books will then be opened, the Indictments read, and every mans works shall be brought to the Bar, and give in evidence either for, or against him. No Title of Honour or Dignity of Place, no Preeminence of Birth or Excellency of natural or acquired Endowments will (in this Court of Equity) be admitted as a sufficient demurr to an immediate and impartial trial. But the High and the Low, the Rich and the Poor, the Noble and the Mean, the Learned and the Ignorant, he that sits upon the Throne, and he that stands *behind the Mill*, must be equally impleaded, and (without respect of persons) shall receive a compensation proportionable to their merits.

In this wonderful Day the Lord of the Harvest will collect his Wheat into the Granaries of Heaven, but the Chaff shall be cast into unquenchable fire, he shall separate his

his Gold from the Droſs, and diſtinguiſh his true Jewels from counterfeit and imperfect ſparkles. *The Sheep will then be ſevered from the Goats*, and ſincere Believers manifeſtly known from ſuperficial and formal Pretenders. What tongue of Man or Angel can deſcribe the Joy of thoſe vigilant Servants, whom their Lord (at this time) will find induſtriouſly employed in the performance of their reſpective Duties? All that formidable pomp, and dreadful ſolemnity which ſhall precede and attend the Advent of the Judge, will but contribute to their comfort, and enhance their conſolation. For they ſhall know that He (who comes with ſuch ineffable Majeſty *to keep his general Seſſions of Righteouſneſs*) is the ſame *Jeſus* which died upon the Croſs for their Redemption. Then that exalted Saviour will accoſt *his Followers in the Regeneration*, *Matth.* 19. 28. with theſe or the like tranſporting

sporting expressions: You (my beloved Disciples) who renounced whatever the world call'd Great and Glorious, for the sake of your crucified Master, and slighted the present enjoyments of Flesh and Blood, in expectation of a future and invisible state of Blessedness: You, who retained your obedience amidst a rebellious Generation, and dar'd to be good and vertuous in an Age of Impiety and Profaneness: You, who subdued your sensual inclinations by the austerities of self-denial, and made them conformable to the nobler dictates of Reason and Religion: In a word, You, who rejoyced in tribulation, and adorned the Doctrine of the Gospel by an exemplary patience in the hour of adversity; This is the Day wherein you shall reap the reward of all your sufferings; a reward so incomparably glorious, and of so sublime a nature, that it will at once create and complete your Beatitude. Your troubles were finite, and expired in a moment, but the duration

of

of your bliss will be infinite and eternal. You shall now enter into that Celestial Kingdom, where all your tears shall be wiped away from your eyes, Rev. 21. 4. *And those crystal drops (which you so plentifully disbursed in the prosecution of your Salvation) shall be congealed into Pearls to enrich your Diadems, and beautifie your Robes of Immortality. There no storm of sorrow shall discompose the serenity of your happiness, no anxiety or vexation, no discontentment or inquietude intrude within the Verge of your felicity. But you shall securely bath in Seas of immixed pleasures, and feast upon delights which know no end.*

But O my Soul! while these caresses of the Divine Mercy will perfect a beatifick calm in the Breasts of the Righteous, what irresistible Tempests of Consternation and Astonishment shall excruciate those impenitent wretches, who chose their portion on this side Heaven, and preferr'd the dung and miseries

of a fleeting World before the real Joys of a permanent Eternity? They shall (in vain) implore the Mountains to bury them beneath their everlasting ruines, that (by a more tolerable destruction) they might escape the fury of that Almighty Indignation ready to overwhelm them. Alas! what will it avail them (in these inextricable exigencies) that they possessed the Marrow and Fatness of the Earth; that they flourished in Wealth and Honour; that they dwelt in Palaces of Cedar, and slept under Canopies embellished with Gold; that they were adored by Crouds of Flatterers, and grew old in popular applause; that they were the Favorites of Princes, and the Darlings of the Multitude; that all things succeeded according to their wishes, and they felt not the misfortunes of other Men: When those splendid Accommodations did serve but to render them the more illustri-

illustriously miserable; when they vanished like a phantastick vision of the night; but the remembrance and the guilt of their mis-enjoyment will (like poisonous Serpents) cling to their Consciences, and be their remorseless Executioners for infinite and interminable Ages. The eyes of their understandings will then be opened (which the fascinations of Sin had closed before) and they shall perceive the folly and the frailty of those impertinent Trifles which they courted with so much passion and desire, and for whose unsatisfiable fruition they neglected their precious Souls, forfeited their title to a blissful Immortality, and subjected themselves to those tremendous extremities which are the inseparable concomitants of an inevitable Damnation. What Worlds would they then give to re-enjoy one minute of that invaluable Time, which they profusely expended in the unprofitable

table *works of Darkneſs*, that (for ſo inconſiderable a ſpace) they might be but within a poſſibility of Salvation? What Preſidents of Mortification! what miracles of Piety! what inimitable Examples of Vertue and Goodneſs would they prove to Mankind, were they to renew the leaſe of their lives? how would they diſeſteem all thoſe magnificent Appearances, thoſe ſpecious ſhadows and glittering nothings which the Idolatrous Worldling ſo ridiculouſly admires, and prize the unmatchable treaſure of an appeaſed Conſcience unſpeakably beyond the moſt tranſcendent terreſtrial Felicities? But alas! it will then be too late for Repentance; and They (who in the Day of their Viſitation contemned the repeated propoſals of a gracious reconciliation) ſhall at this time, with tears of bloud, ſupplicate for mercy, and be refus'd it. And the holy *Jeſus* (who would have been

their

their Saviour, and so often extended the arms of his compassion to receive them into favour, if they would but believe and repent, will (as their inexorable Judge) utter this direful sentence against them, *Matth.* 25. 41. *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* O terrible! O irreversible Decree! from whence there can be no appeal, and which will no sooner be pronounced, but those condemned Reprobates must be for ever exiled from (that source of supreme Beatitude) the ecstatical Presence of Almighty God, and (by Legions of Apostate Spirits) shall be haled away to the dismal Abóads of Horror, and amazing Confusion, where they shall languish beneath the pressure of insufferable punishments, and (by a wonder of Omnipotency) shall in Torrents of Fire sustain an extremity of Cold, and in Rivers of Ice be tormented *with everlasting*

Burnings. To be short, They shall there feed the Worm *that never dies*, and swelter in those flames which *cannot be quenched.* And the consideration of the perpetuity of those supernal Joys which they rejected for transitory vanities, and of the endless continuation of their infernal tortures, will shipwrack all their hopes in the dreadful Gulf of Desperation, and plunge them into the bottomless Abysses of the lowest Hell.

O Blessed God! since thou art formidable in thy Judgments, and thy Anger is a consuming fire; since those incorrigible Rebels who despise the offers of thy Mercy, shall become the victims of thy implacable vengeance, and glorifie thy Justice in unimaginable pains; since thou hast appointed a time when an Eternity of happiness or misery shall be the reward of our Actions, and we must stand or fall according to the works of our hands: Vouchsafe, that

that the contemplation of these weighty truths may be such a prevalent Inducement to the amendment of our lives, that we may work out our Salvation with fear and trembling. Let not the pernicious insinuations of this deceivable World make us unmindful of the wrath to come: But let us walk with that awful care and vigilant circumspection, that we may appear with comfort in that horrible Day, wherein the greater part of mis-called Christians shall be consigned to an immortal Destruction.

THE
Fourth Consideration
UPON
HEAVEN.

GLorious things are spoken of thee, thou City of God, Psal. 87. 2. But the most exalted *Encomiums* are infinitely beneath thy deserved praises. For what finite understanding, what created Tongue can be able to comprehend or express unlimited and ineffable excellencies? If this lower World (the place of our exilement, and a Theatre of inevitable sorrows) be so wonderfully amiable, that our eyes are intranced with the variety of its beauties, and can never sufficiently admire the marvels they behold; if

the Firmament (which is but a Foot-cloth for the Saints to tread upon) be enamelled with so many starry Jewels, and enriched with such radiant Planets, and glittering Constellations: how transcendent, how superlatively magnificent are the inner Rooms, and the privy chambers of that Empyreal Palace where the adorable Deity does vouchsafe to communicate his essential and ecstatick glories? O desirable Mansion! one minutes aboad in thy sacred Courts will make us more than amends for all the miseries we can possibly endure in this valley of tears: and how inconceiveable will our reward be, when (by a miracle of Divine mercy) we shall be admitted to an everlasting participation of thy immense and inutterable felicities? It was the certain hope of thy enjoyment which encouraged the Primitive Martyrs to sustain the most exquisite tortures with an insuperable constancy,

ſtancy, and to triumph in the midſt of flames. The comfortable expectation of thy fruition was the grand incentive which induced the brave *Ignatius* (when threatned by his perſecutors with an extremity of torments) to make this heroick and magnanimous reply: *Fire, Gallows, Beaſts, breaking of my bones, quartering of my members, cruſhing of my body, all the torments of the Devil together let them come upon me, ſo I may enjoy my Lord Jeſus, and his Kingdom.*

It is an undeniable maxim, That all ſecular happineſſes are built upon brittle foundations. The moſt ſublime terreſtrial delights (even in their greateſt complacencies) are but tranſient vanities, and conclude in vexation: But the pleaſures of the Celeſtial habitations are refined to ſo extraordinary a degree of perfection, that they will be able to ſatiate the moſt enlarged deſires of our capacious Souls. There we

ſhall

ſhall poſſeſs (inſtead of a living Death which every moment drags us towards the Grave) a Life glorious beyond imagination, durable as the Ages of Eternity, and whoſe enjoyment will entitle us to exceſſive and inexplicable ſatisfactions. If we admire Beauty? our ravished eyes (in lieu of corporeal objects) ſhall ſurvey thoſe immaterial glories which ſtream from the Fountain of uncreated Light, and ſhall be permitted to contemplate that wonderful clarity which proceeds from the beatifical viſage of the ſupreme Creator. If Riches be the center of our affections? Gold, Rubies, Pearls, Diamonds, and whatever we account moſt precious and valuable in the Univerſe, are but faint Metaphors to deſcribe the inеſtimable treaſures of the ſupernal World. If Honour be the ſubject of our ambition? what are Scepters and Crowns but illuſtrious Miſeries? what are all the Grandeurs upon

Earth

Earth but gaudy ſhadows? in compariſon of thoſe incorruptible Diadems, thoſe permanent and ſubſtantial Dignities, which flouriſh above. If we delight in Muſick? there we ſhall hear the panegyrical Anthems of the Seraphick Quire, and ſhall bear a part in the ſolemn celebration of that Almighty Being, whoſe only preſence will be ſufficient to repleniſh us with immeaſurable bleſſedneſs. To conclude, nothing can be added to that immenſity of Beatitude which we ſhall there enjoy; but we ſhall be as completely happy as the immediate viſion of the incomprehenſibly-glorious Trinity, the converſation of Angels, the ſociety of triumphant Spirits, and the inexpreſſible Accommodations of a bliſsful Heaven can poſſibly make us. And to conſummate our felicity, all our enjoyments ſhall be inveſted with Eternity.

THE

THE
Fifth Consideration
UPON
AFFLICTION.

AFfliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground, Job 5. 6. They flow not (as the Heathen Poet fondly surmized) from the imaginary sources of Chance and Casualty: but have their original and emanation from the unchangeable Decree and Will of the Almighty. *Shall there be evil in a City* (says God by the mouth of the Prophet, *Amos 3. 6.*) *and the Lord hath not done it?* And indeed his unwearied Providence does not only exert it self in the government

of

of the World in general, but is so indispensably interested in our respective and most peculiar concernments, that *our very hairs are numbred*, nor can one of them fall from our heads without his notice and Divine permission. He watches over us with eyes *that never slumber*, and with such a particular advertence, that the slightest misfortune has not any power to invade us, until it receive an immediate commission from his adorable pleasure, who manages all our trials to the Exaltation of his own Glory, the exercise of our Faith, and the Salvation of our immortal Souls in the terrible day of the Lord *Jesus*. And now methinks a due contemplation of this irrefragable verity might be sufficient to supersede our mutinous discontentments, silence our insolent repinings, and charm us into a sedate compliance with the methods of that unerring Wisdom which infallibly knows what is

most

most requisite and convenient for us.

When the Prophet *Samuel* foretold *Eli* of that dreadful Judgment which (like a sudden inundation) should overwhelm his unfortunate Family; the pious Saint (without the least reluctation) made this humble reply, 1 *Sam.* 3. 18. *It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.* And holy *Job* (after the loss of all that wealth which rendred him the most considerable person of the Orient) thus nobly spake his resignation, *Job* 1. 21. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* What more ungrateful disobedience! than to struggle under the hand of that Heavenly Father, whose miraculous clemency (even in his most rigorous dispensations) aims at nothing but the welfare and benefit of his children. Alas! he sees how apt we are to be enveigled by the treacherous smiles of prosperity; how

how inclinable to affect (with inordinate resentments) the pomp and vanities of this accursed World: and did not his superlative Goodness (in commiseration of our frailty) imbitter the sweetness of those sublunary Accommodations with an allay of Adversity, we should prefer Earth before Heaven, and consequently for mere Ideas of felicity, relinquish our title to essential happiness.

But besides, if we seriously consider how the least of those numerous Impieties (which we daily commit against the honour and majesty of our Sovereign Creator) renders us obnoxious to interminable punishments; and how the most stupendious disasters which may possibly befal us in this state of mortality, are infinitely more tolerable than that Hell which our sins have deserved: we have so little cause to murmur at our temporal castigations, that we have abun-

abundant reason to acknowledge God's unspeakable mercy to us, who gives us not over to a final destruction, but scourges us here, that he may spare us hereafter, and makes use of our transitory distresses as a means to secure us from everlasting miseries. There can be no higher instance of the Divine Favour, no clearer attestation of our Son-ship and Adoption than sanctified affliction. *As many as I love* (says the Lord, *Rev.* 3. 19.) *I rebuke and chasten.* And the Author to the Hebrews positively avers, *Heb.* 12. 8. *that without correction* (*whereof all are partakers*) *we are bastards and not sons.* And indeed if we look back to the generations of old, and review the memorials of our Forefathers, we shall find that (from the beginning) it has been the constant method of the supreme Power to exercise his most beloved servants with variety of calamities. The holy Patriarchs, the Prophets,

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the Apostles, and all the Primitive Saints and Confessors have drank of these *waters of Marah*, and passed first over the Red Sea of persecution, before they could arrive at the celestial *Canaan*. Nay, the great Captain of our Salvation (whose example ought to be a living Law to us) *was made perfect by sufferings, Heb.* 2. 10. and there is an absolute necessity that we must be conformable to him in trouble before we can resemble him in glory. Is it fit that we should circle our brows with Roses, when his venerable head was impaled with a wreath of Thorns? that we should slumber out our days upon the Couches of Ease and Pleasure, when his whole life (even from the Manger to the Tomb) was a continued scene of labour and inexplicable sorrows? Can we be so unreasonably partial, as to think that our way to Heaven should be strewed with Flowers, when He *through*

many tribulations entred into the Kingdom of God, Acts 4. 22. We know *that the Disciple is not above his Master, neither is the Servant before his Lord.* And that Prince of Righteousness has expressly told us, that if we share not in his Cross, we shall bear no part in his triumph, unless we suffer with him in this World, we shall never have the honour to reign with him in the World to come.

We read in profane Story, that several Ethnick Philosophers (by the bare strength of morality) have sustained their grievances with an impregnable fortitude, and bravely withstood the most vigorous assaults of an adverse condition. And shall we, (who have listed our selves under the Banners of the Gospel, and (by our baptismal engagement) proclaimed an irreconcileable War against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil,) desert our station in the day of Battel, throw away

away our Arms when we have most need to use them, and expect an immunity from those Incumbrances which (in an extraordinary manner) are the indispensable concomitants of our Religion, and the inseparable adjuncts of the Followers of the holy *Jesus*? For shame let us not so much discredit our profession as to be out-done by Infidels in that generous vertue of Constancy; especially when what they did was merely to acquire the vain applause of their proselytes: But we strive for a prize of so transcendent an excellence, that all our hardships will appear as nothing when in balance with that mass of blessedness which will be the compensation of our fidelity and perseverance.

Let us, O let us (in imitation of that miracle of obedience, our crucified Redeemer) chearfully submit to the Divine Disposals, and (beneath the greatest pressures) cherish our hope with this comfor-

table assurance, that the heavier our misfortunes are here, the more weighty will our Crowns be hereafter; the more hazardous the fight, the more illustrious will the triumph be. There is not a tear we shed, not a sigh we breath in the accomplishment of our Christian warfare, but are recorded in the Registry of Heaven, and (at the grand day of Retribution) shall be requited with an infinity of happiness. The time will come, when we shall reap the pleasant fruits of all our bitter labours, and *for those light Afflictions which last but for a moment, shall receive a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17.

THE

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THE
Sixth Consideration
UPON
RICHES.

THE great Doctor of the Gentiles lays this solemn command upon his Scholar *Timothy*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. *Charge them that are Rich in this World, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches.* That eminent Apostle was thoroughly convinced, that men who live in the height of abundance, are apt to fly out into the most exorbitant extravagances, to forget both themselves and their Maker, and to misemploy (without an extraordinary proportion of Grace) the blessings of Divine Pro-

vidence to the dishonour of the Donor, and the utter ruine of their own Souls. And indeed if we cast an eye into the World we shall find this truth too fatally exemplified in innumerable instances. How many Rich men do prostitute their wealth to Luxury and wantonness? How many lavish out their exuberant revenues in Gluttony, Drunkenness, and excess of Riot, while the Poor and needy starve at their Gates, and are often refused the Crumbs which fall from their over-charged Tables? How many (of a temper directly contrary to the former) are so prodigiously covetous, that they not only behold the exigences of others without the least bowels of compassion, but deny to themselves the necessary refreshments of Nature, and want in the midst of plenty? who are commonly more insolent and imperious in their behaviour than those to whom God has given *all things richly to enjoy?* They look

look upon their indigent Brethren with that contempt and supercilioufneſs, as if their poverty had degraded them from the dignity of humane Nature; and ſwell with ſo much arrogancy and preſumption, as though the poſſeſſion of a little ſhining clay did create an eſſential Diſparity between them and the reſt of mankind. But give me leave to acquaint theſe ungrateful wretches (who affront the Almighty with his own benefits) that they are but the Stewards of that Treaſure which they eſteem their own. That the cries of the naked, the Fatherleſs and the Widow, (whom they rob of their Dues, and ſuffer to periſh for want of Bread) ſhall riſe up in Judgment againſt them. That there is a time to come (a time appointed from all Eternity) when the great Maſter of the Family will call them to a ſtrict account for the Talents committed to their managery, and if it

be found that in the least particular they have violated their trust, will consign them to that unquenchable Fire where they shall beg in vain for a drop of cold water to cool their inflamed tongues.

Alas! who would center his affections upon the corruptible Riches of this World, that does but consider the inconveniences and dangers which attend them? How many might have dwelt long and happily, under the shelter of an humble Fortune, whom their treacherous prosperity has exposed to a speedy destruction? What Massacres, Rapines, Adulteries, Incests, Frauds, Robberies, Seditions, Conspiracies, Rebellions, and a thousand other Villanies has the insatiable thirst of Gold acted upon the Theater of the Universe? What millions of Souls does the love of Money (which S. *Paul* justly stiles *the root of all evil*, 1 *Tim.*6.10.) plunge into eternal Damnation? The example

ample of the Rich man in the Gospel may be a sufficient warning to deter us from confiding in *the Mammon of unrighteousness*. That *Fool* (as the Holy Ghost is pleased to call him, *Luke* 12. 20.) had no sooner attained a plentiful estate, and begun to flatter himself with an expectation of enjoying it for many years to come, but (the ensuing night) his Soul was demanded of him, and all his phantastick designs were blasted by the suddenness of his unsuspected destiny.

It is the advice of the Royal Psalmist, *Psal.* 62. 10. *If Riches encrease, set not thy heart upon them.* And his wise Son gives the reason of that admonition, *Prov.* 23. 5. *for they make themselves wings, and fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven.* They are naturally transient and fugitive, nor can we have any assurance of their certain aboad with us. The Fire, Water, Thieves, and a multitude of other accidents may im-

poverish us in a moment, and reduce us to a state of indigence and beggery. But their Inconstancy is not their only vanity. They have besides an inherent insufficiency in them, which renders them utterly incapable of affording us any solid Contentation. Naturalists observe, That as the form of the World is Globular, so the heart of Man retains a triangular Figure, and from thence they infer, that it is impossible for the one to repleat the corners of the other. We may as soon fill our Coffers with Air as our Minds with Riches. Alas! our Souls are of too Angelical a nature to reap satisfaction from the enjoyment of sublunary objects. Nothing beneath the beatifical vision of the Deity can terminate the longings of those diviner and most excellent parts of us.

But again, as Riches are unable to make us happy, so they have no power to secure us from those miseries

ries which equally invade wretched Mortality. Instead of releasing their owners from the pressure of their cares, they make them more heavy and insupportable. And (in the matter of diseases) Experience teaches us, that an embroidered Slipper is no preservative against the Gout, nor can the wearing of an Imperial Diadem supersede the Head-ach. Mountains of Gold and Rocks of Diamonds are too mean a price to procure the least interval of ease when we are tortur'd by the violent twitches of the Stone, the Colick, or the like acute distempers.

And (as to our Spiritual concerns) they cannot make us better, and more holy than we were before. They are no Balm to heal *a wounded Spirit*, nor can they appease the tumults of an enraged Conscience. They cannot purchase Grace, nor buy Repentance. They cannot retard the approach of

Death, neither *will they profit us in the day of wrath.*

O the folly and madneſs of avaritious Men! That they whom the mercy of their Creator did intend for the fruition of celeſtial Beatitude, ſhould ſo ignobly recede from the glorious end of their Being, as to conſtitute their happineſs in poſſeſſing the Droſs and Dung of this fading World; and for that ſordid Pelf (which muſt periſh like their Ordure on the ground) ſhould hazard the loſs of Heaven and immarceſcible felicities. The very Heathens were ſo ſenſible of the vanity of Riches, that ſeveral of their learned Sages did look upon the purſuit of Wealth as abſolutely inconſiſtent with the practice of Vertue and Goodneſs, and for that cauſe prefer'd the loweſt degree of poverty before the moſt opulent and ſplendid condition. When *Archelaus* invited *Socrates* to his Court, that he might relieve his neceſſities,

and

and advance him to deſerved honour; that brave Philoſopher diſmiſſed his meſſengers with this heroick anſwer; *Tell the King that a Meaſure of Flower may be bought in* Athens *for a half-penny, and Water is to be had for nothing; and though your Maſter does ſuppoſe I want, yet I have enough becauſe I am contented with a little.* *Bias* flying from his native City (which he was credibly informed would be beſieged without hope of reſcue) left all his Moveables and Gold behind him, and being demanded the reaſon of that ſeemingly extravagant action, made this ſober reply, *Thoſe Goods which are truly mine I carry with me*, meaning the inviſible Ornaments and Graces of his Mind. What a ſhame is it for Chriſtians, that men who had no knowledge of the true God, no certainty of another Life to come, ſhould ſo far tranſcend them in a generous diſvaluation of Outward things? That they who

saw but by the glimmering Lamp of Nature, should arrive to a nobler height of self-denial, than those that dwell under the glorious Light of the Gospel? But let them beware, lest the Morality of these Infidels (who knew so little and perform'd so much) be produced in evidence against them at the general Judgment, and contribute to their more inexcusable Damnation.

Our blessed Saviour tells us, *Matth. 6. 24. we cannot serve God and Mammon*; not can the love of this World and the hope of Heaven consist together. We must first abandon (at least in our affections) all Secular concernments, before we can be fit Candidates for Eternity. The only way of employing Wealth (that it prove not destructive to the owners) is (as the Apostle intimates, *1 Tim. 6. 18.*) *to be rich in good works*, to cloath the Naked, feed the Hungry, supply the Indigent, and to transfer

it

it (by the hands of the Poor) to those Regions of Immortality, where (in lieu of our perishable Riches) we shall receive those everlasting Treasures, which neither Time, nor Fate, nor Death will have power to take away from us.

THE

THE
Seventh Consideration
UPON
CONTENTATION.

ALthough the Divine Wisdom (for the preservation of Order in the Universe) has thought it convenient that Men should act several parts upon this Theater of Nature, That some should command and give Laws, while others are subservient and obey, That some should flow in an Ocean of plenty, while others wraftle with their invincible necessities: Yet as in their birth they were alike, so impartial Death will reduce them to the same equality, and annul those political Formalities which com-

complete no real distinction between them. The Crown and the Scepter must be levelled with the Mattock and the Spade, nor shall the dust of the greatest Monarch (after the expiration of a few years) be known from the ashes of the meanest Slave. *We brought nothing into this World* (says the Apostle, 1 *Tim.* 6. 7.) *and it is certain we can carry nothing out.* And from this premised consideration we may deduce most irrefragable conclusions, *viz.* That it is the duty and the interest of every Christian, to acquiesce in that station of life wherein it has pleased God to place him; To account himself but a Traveller (through this valley of tears) to his everlasting inheritance; To look upon the good things of this World as vanities, which can attend him no further than the Grave; And to esteem necessary food and raiment as a sufficient competency to support him in his progress to Eternity.

And

And indeed Contentation is so indispensably requisite to the promotion of our felicity, that we cannot possibly be happy without it. This is that exquisite vertue which (by an admirable Chymistry) transmutes all it touches into Gold, makes a man rich in poverty, and gives a pleasant relish to the most bitter condition. Without this invaluable endowment, Wealth, Greatness, Honour, and the most pompous Accommodations are but gilded Miseries, and (instead of contributing to the satisfaction of their possessors) enhance their vexation. O what a Heaven would men enjoy! did they practise the grand duty of resignation, and thankfully embrace that portion which their Creator has allotted them. What an Angelical life might they lead! could they be perswaded to comply with the will of the Almighty, to cast their burdens upon that Sovereign Power who

who vouchsafes *to care for them*, 1 *Pet.* 5. 7. and whose Omnipotent Wisdom manages the most contrariant events to the benefit of them that love him. Alas! have we any reason to suspect the kindness of our heavenly Father, or to mistrust that his Providence will deny us any thing that befits us? when our blessed Saviour acquaints us (in his incomparable Sermon on the Mount, *Matth.* 6.) That *the Fowls of the Air* (without gathering into Barns) receive their Commons from his Table, and are daily fed by the large hand of his bounty. That *the Lilies of the Field* (which were created but to flourish for a day) *do neither toil nor spin*, and yet are clothed with such native Ornaments, that *even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these*. Can we retain so injurious an opinion of that universal Benefactor, as to think that he who *feeds the young Ravens that call upon him*,

him, Pſal. 147. 9. and embelliſhes the Flowers of the Spring, ſhould overskip the wants of thoſe nobler Creatures which bear the impreſs of his Divine image, are his children by adoption, and deſigned for the enjoyment of unlimited bleſſedneſs? Can we rationally ſuppoſe that He who preſerved us wonderfully in the Womb, nouriſhed us when we hung upon our Mothers Breaſts, and (by a continued miracle) has purveyed for us ever ſince we were born, ſhould ſuperſede his accuſtomed liberality, and withhold thoſe ſuccours which we truly ſtand in need of? I muſt confeſs, He has not contracted with us to gratifie our artificial neceſſities, to grant us Riches for the fuel of our Luxury, or Honours to make us proud and inſolent: He has not promiſed that we ſhall be clothed (like the Glutton in the Goſpel) *in purple and fine linnen, and fare ſumptuouſly every day*; but we have his

his inviolable word, *that if we seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, all other things* (conducible to the great end of our Salvation) *shall be added unto us.* I would fain know of that man who quarrels at the uneasiness of his fortune, whether his repining does make it more supportable than it was before? I am sure that upon a just inquisition he would be induced to give a verdict to the contrary. We may render our lives uncomfortable by our unprofitable solicitudes, shipwrack (those inestimable Jewels) our Souls, in the turbulent Seas of discontentment and rebellion, but can never frustrate the Decrees of Heaven; they are setled upon an immoveable foundation, and must inevitably come to pass. And therefore since how mean soever our condition be, it is that which has been appointed for us from all Eternity, it becomes us (at least) to make a vertue of

neceſſity, and quietly ſuſtain what we cannot poſſibly avoid. Would it not be a bold preſumption for the Clay to ſay to the Potter who form-ed it, *Why haſt thou made me thus?* and is it not a more aggravating te-merity, that Duſt and Aſhes, Worms which muſt die to mor-row, ſhould dare to arraign the diſpenſations of the Deity, and (upon every trifle which diſpleaſes them) impeach the Equity of that adorable Majeſty, *all whoſe ways* (as the *Pſalmiſt* words it, *Pſal.* 25. 9.) *are mercy and truth?* But admit that the Supreme Being ſhould ſo far concede to the extravagant de-ſires of malecontented men, as to diſcompoſe the Oeconomy of his Providence, remove thoſe pretend-ed preſſures they ſo much complain of, and give them liberty to carve for themſelves; alas! how fatal would their choices be! they would immediately fix upon thoſe things which would infallibly ruine them.

And

And is it not a more commendable point of discretion to submit to the disposal of their Maker, and (by an ingenuous affiance in his supereminent Goodness) ingage him to provide for them, than be permitted to make their own destructive elections? especially when they cannot but acknowledge (without a blasphemous impudence) that he is infinitely more capable both to know and to chuse what shall be for their good, than they themselves; that whatsoever he does, is an act which results from the greatest wisdom, and consequently will prove most instrumental to the confirmation of their present and future welfare.

It was the saying of a learned Divine; *Nothing can come amiss to a resigned Spirit; no misfortune incommode a contented mind.* And indeed Sickness, Indigence, Contempt, Reproach, Imprisonment, Banishment, and the rest of those phantastick

taſtick terrors (whoſe very names ſo much affright us) are but evils in imagination; and did we conſult with our reaſon, we ſhould find that our own impatience were our greateſt miſery. Good God! did Men deliberately weigh the inconſiderableneſs of temporal felicities, the pageantry and impoſture, the emptineſs and vanity of whatever appears moſt deſirable beneath the Sun, they would be ſo far from reſenting the want of their fruition, that (on the contrary) they would eſteem it a mercy to have miſſed them. It is impoſſible to gather thoſe Roſes without pricking our Fingers with their Thorns. And upon this account ſeveral wiſe Heathens did not improperly alledge, *That a competent ſubſiſtence was infinitely more eligible than the higheſt abundance.*

Man liveth not by bread alone (ſaid our Saviour to the tempter, *Matth.* 4. 4.) *but by every word that proceedeth*

ceedeth out of the mouth of God. His blessing can extract plenty out of poverty, and make the coursest diet more grateful to the Palate than the most costly and elaborated delicates. *A good Conscience is a continual feast,* and he who possesses that, carries a Heaven in his own bosom, enjoys more than the whole World can give him, and may look without envy upon those profuse varieties which oppress the Table and Stomach of the Epicure. The wisest of Kings tells us, *Prov.* 16.8. *Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without equity*: And the most learned of the Apostles solemnly avers, 1 *Tim.* 6. 6. *That Godliness with contentment is great gain.* Alas! how small a pittance suffices Nature? If we have but decent Garments to cover our nakedness, and keep us warm; if we have but Meat and Drink to relieve our hunger, and allay our thirst, what need we require more?

All

All beyond the golden Mean is superfluous, and merely for ostentation. I have read of mighty Potentates, who have descended from their Thrones, laid aside their Imperial Diadems, and divested the cognizances of their Royalty to seek that Tranquillity in a lowly Fortune, which they could not possibly obtain amidst those glittering troubles which attend Empire and Dominion. Quietness and true satisfaction are more frequently found in Cottages than in Palaces; a great Estate is but a great incumbrance, and a Man may be as much a prisoner in Fetters of Gold, as in Manacles of Iron. He, and none but He, merits the name of a free and happy person, who has so magnanimous a Soul as to entertain all accidents with Equanimity of mind; who makes the Supreme Will the rule of his Obedience, and has learnt the Divine Art of knowing *how to be abased, and how to abound,*

abound, to be full, and to be hungry, Phil. 4. 12. As that natural Alchymist the Bee sucks the sweetest Honey from the most bitter Flowers; so he (by the assistance of the holy Spirit) improves the most adverse occurrences to the noblest advantages, employs them as Agents to establish his acquiescence here, and ensure his beatitude hereafter. In a word, Contentation reconciles a man to every condition, renders him unchangeable in the greatest Mutations; and whosoever can entitle himself to this pleasant, as well as excellent Quality, may be justly said (though he has nothing) *to possess all things*, 2 *Cor.* 6. 10.

THE END.

AN ESSAY UPON The Eighth Verse OF THE 107. *PSALM*,

WHEREIN

Is Endeavoured a Compendious Narration of the most extraordinary Mercies dispensed (by the Almighty) to Mankind, from the Infancy of the World to its now extremity of Age.

By J. H.

LONDON,

Printed for *R. Royston*, 1676.

TO THE
READER.

Candid Reader,

A Copy of this little Treatise was formerly presented to a worthy Lady, who is now a glorious Saint in Heaven. And indeed had it pleased the Almighty to continue her a-while longer among us, I would have exposed it to a publick view under the Patronage of her honourable Name. But seeing Divine Providence (by translating her to the Abodes of Felicity) has superseded that Design, I submit it to thy charitable perusal without the accustomed formality of a Dedication. Farewell.

BODLEIANA BIBL

An ESSAY upon the Eighth Verse of the 107. *PSALM.*

O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the Wonders which he doth for the Children of Men.

GReat! glorious! and incomprehensible Being! Thou who art inthron'd above all material Heavens, circled with essential Glory, and environed with rays of incommunicable Majesty; in comparison of whose unequall'd excellence the *Seraphims* (Spirits admirable for their dignity and perfection) may be impeach'd of impurity, and before whose radiant Throne the Angelical Armies, and all the beau-

teous Hosts of Heaven (with a trembling prostration) pay their adorations. Thou art an Essence awful in thy works, inscrutable in thy actions, and formidable in thy wonders: all Powers and Dominations are subordinate to thy Scepter, and depend upon the pleasure of thy uncircumscribed Will. Thou didst (out of nothing) display the mighty Universe, and (from an indigested Mass and shapeless Chaos) didst produce the harmonious Fabrick of the spacious World. Thou didst separate the Waters from the Earth (by confining the *Ocean* to her inviolable shores) and madest this irrepealable Decree, *Thus far shall your Dominion extend, nor shall your fluid Empire transgress these limitations.* Thou didst beautifie the new-born Earth with an infinity of amiable Existences, and glorious Productions. The lofty Hills were arrayed with multitudes of stately Trees, whose wealthy branches did always

always exuberate with delicious and exquisite Fruit. The luxurious Valleys were richly adorned with a curious and ever-flourishing Tapestry. The fragrant Meads did triumph in the numerous variety of their flowry Excelleneies. And the whole Creation (from an imperfect Embryo) was reduced to a complete and admirable order.

But there yet wanted a Creature, whose noble composition might entitle him to the Empire of that illustrious Fabrick, and might justifie his unrivalled pretensions to the fruition of those then unallayed pleasures and immixed felicities. Thou didst therefore convocate the supremely-blessed Trinity, and (by thy omnipotent Wisdom) didst (of the Dust of the Earth) create *Man*. Whom thou didst ennoble with an intellectual Soul, and endowedst him with that Divine and Sacred faculty of Reason. Thou didst crown him with Glory, embrace

his brows with an awful and diffusive Majesty, and gavest him an unlimited Jurisdiction over all the inferior Creatures, who (with an obsequious reverence) acknowledg'd him their Soveraign. Nothing could be added to that immensity of happiness which he did then enjoy.

But when (by the violation of that first and dread command) he forfeited his innocency, and infringed his obedience, from what a sublimity of beatitude, and transcendency of felicity did he immediately fall! He who before was a glorious Image of the Almighty Creator, an exact Copy of the Divine Original, and the admired Masterpiece of Nature, how did one fatal act abolish his Glories, disrobe him of all his Excellencies, and (as a just remuneration of his guilt) intail Sin and Death upon his then unborn and deplorable Posterity? Alas! how did the perpetration of

one

one offence discompose that tranquillity and harmonious concord which inform'd the Universe? The Creatures (that before his fall were subservient to his sway) then spurn'd at his Scepter, renounced their allegiance, and commenced an irreconciliable War against him. The Elements (by a dreadful combination) conspired his ruine, and the contagious Air (which at first courted his senses with variety of aromatick odours) did infect him with pestilentious and fatal Diseases, which (with an implacable rage) assaulted his most noble Faculties, and endeavour'd his dissolution. Corroding sorrows, incessant solicitudes, and excruciating anxieties (like impetuous storms) did distemper that calmness and serene constitution of Spirit which he before enjoyed; and He who in his state of Innocency was invested with all those solid blessings which were the inseparable concomitants

of perfection, (upon the withdrawing of his obedience) was reduced to an extremity of wretchedness.

And his degenerate off-spring did not only retain the tincture of original corruption, but did indulge themselves in a licentious commission of the most sublime impieties. No Religion or prescriptions of Vertue, no compensation of Goodness or fear of a future and everlasting punishment could restrain the impetuosity of their exorbitant rebellions; but their sawcy transgressions arrived to so intolerable an eminence, that they confronted Heaven, and exasperated thy long suspended vengeance to extirp them by some formidable and stupendious Judgment. Nor could thy just Indignation be appeas'd, till (by an Inundation vast as their crimes) thou didst drown the guilty World, and all the Creatures in it, but what righteous *Noah* (by Divine inspiration

inspiration and a prophetick wisdom) secured in the Ark; from whose fruitful loins the Universe was again repeopled.

Yet the succeeding generations forgot that illustrious Mercy of their Progenitors preservation: nor could the consideration of the late terrible Deluge oblige them to the dilection of Vertue, or reclaim them from the pursuit of Vice; but they still persevered in a bold perpetration of their affected and darling iniquities. The ambition of Empire, Glory and Dominion did violate the Sacred ties of Nature, and cancell'd the most solemn bonds of Consanguinity and Alliance. Man was to Man the greatest enemy, and destructive War became a partial Arbiter of the most trivial dissentions.

But, gracious God! thou didst (in that impious age) vouchsafe to select righteous *Abraham*, to whom thou didst dispense a glorious pro-

mise, that *in his seed all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed.* Thou didst make the same protestation to holy *Isaac*, and didst inforce it (by a solemn oath) to *Jacob*, and by a providential preservation of *Joseph*, and an eminent advancement of that noble Youth to the favour of the then *Egyptian* Monarch: thou didst settle the Patriarchs in those exuberant Regions watered by the *Nile*. After whose decease their then vastly-multiplied off-spring were oppressed by the tyranny of an imperious servitude, and did groan beneath the rigour of a savage and insupportable thraldom. But (after the efflux of some Centuries of Years) by the subordinate ministration of generous *Moses*, and by several dreadful Wonders terribly performed in presence of the amazed Inhabitants, thou didst redeem them from that ignoble servitude to which they had been so long subjected, and (by the irresistible

power

power of an omnipotent Arm) didst lead them in triumph out of that barbarous Kingdom. Thou thy self wert their Almighty Guide, and the *Erythraan* Sea (which by an admired separation of her Waves) gave the Sacred Host a secure passage to the *Arabian* Continent, did at thy beck (by the formidable regression of her Waters) overwhelm haughty *Pharaoh* and all his potent Army.

But the ungrateful *Israelites* basely forgot all those prodigious Miracles so lately wrought in their deliverance and preservation, and (by their frequent Mutinies and sawcy Murmurings) did excruciate thy long-suffering patience, and excited thy wrathful Indignation to a resolution of their total extirpation. Notwithstanding, thy Clemency did then transcend thy Justice, and thou didst favourably reflect upon that solemn and inviolable Covenant made with their deceased Progenitors.

genitors. And (by giving them several famous victories under the glorious conduct of those magnanimous Heroes, *Moses* and warlike *Joshuah*) thou didst place them in possession of the promised Land of *Canaan*.

But the most illustrious Mercies could not confine that refractory People within the limits of their obedience, or restrain the succeeding generations from their wild and insolent Rebellions; but their base ingratitude did often provoke that dreadful anger which would have proved fatal to those incorrigible offenders, had not thy infinite Goodness (even in the height of thy fury) induced thee to an immerited commiseration of their frailty. And though they were sometimes subjected to the tyranny of their neighbouring Nations, yet (in the depth of their misery) thou didst reprieve them from their oppressions, redress their grievances,

and

and (by several extraordinary preservations) didst declare thy self to be their only Great and Almighty Protector. And when they spurned at the government of their Judges, and (with an audacious presumption) exclaimed for a King, thou didst graciously concede to their extravagant desires, and (by the hand of venerable *Samuel*) didst impale strenuous *Saul* with the regal Diadem. Who (in the beginning of his Reign) did demean himself with so August and Majestick a deportment, that he wan the admiration of the People, and (by the acquisition of several signal victories) so highly gratifi'd and oblig'd his subjects, that their esteem of that new Monarch did incite them to resentments not much short of adoration. But when he derogated from those principles of Vertue which at first adorn'd his government, and rashly pursued the inordinate suggestions of his debauched

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Affections, he did ever after languish beneath the pressure of thy weighty displeasure, and inflam'd that fatal Indignation which could be appeased by no less an expiation than the forfeiture of his Life and Kingdom, which he (not ingloriously) resigned in a dreadful engagement between his Forces and the *Philistian* Army.

Then (that most Divine of Poets, and most excellent of Men) magnanimous *David* (exalted from the humble fortune of a Shepherd) did assume the imperial Scepter; a Prince of so unequall'd a courage, and invincible fortitude, that he not only revenged the slaughter of his unfortunate Predecessor (by a complete conquest of the late victorious *Philistins*) but also subdued all the contiguous Nations, and (by the success and terror of his triumphant Arms) did inforce the bordering Kingdoms to a tributary subjection. After whose decease

(that

(that miracle of Wisdom) magnificent *Solomon* did ascend the Royal Throne. In whose capacious Soul all those Vertues did unanimously concenter which might render him capable of Empire; and beneath whose halcyon government the happy *Israelites* did enjoy the products of a long and glorious Peace. But his degenerate Son (by the seduction of his youthful Consociates) did inconsiderately disoblige ten of the Tribes of *Israel*, and made that incurable disunion which could never after be cemented: but the irreconciliable Kingdoms of *Judah* and *Samaria* (for several Centuries of years) did (by all the extremities of an almost never-discontinued War) endeavour each others devastation. And the dissolute People (in imitation of their irreligious Princes) did give the reins to their most exorbitant Affections. Not could the frequent admonitions of so many eminent Prophets, or the

terrible

terrible comminations of those impendent Judgments ready to overwhelm them, deter them from the prosecution of their destructive transgressions. But they slighted those Sacred Ambassadors of Heaven, and oftentimes (by the bloudy guilt of their slaughter) did heighten the grandeur of their impieties, and excited thy direful Anger to so just a detestation of the horridness of their offences, that thou didst inthral them to several formidable Nations, and didst crush them beneath the deserved weight of a tedious and relentless servitude. But when they did supplicate thy Almighty assistance, and (by a penitential acknowledgement of their Sins) implor'd a dispensation of thy Mercy, Thou (according to thy accustomed compassion) didst vouchsafe to restore them to their long-deserted Country, and (from that Abyss of Misery wherein they were lately plunged) didst again exalt them to

their

their ancient state of glory. And in all those various contingencies, and remarkable revolutions which (for so many succeſſive Ages) ſhook the convulſed Univerſe, thou didſt ſtill ſecure them from an utter extirpation.

But when the appointed Time of Mans Salvation did approach, predicted by ſo many glorious prophecies, and prognoſticated by all the conſpicuous and unerrable Oracles of Scripture; when the Gates of *Janus* were cloſed, and the whole World (tributary to the *Roman* Empire) did enjoy an univerſal tranquillity under the quiet reign of the grand *Auguſtus*: Then the only begotten Son of the Eternal Father, and the ſecond Perſon of the adorable Trinity (out of an infinitely compaſſionate conſideration of our deplorable condition) was pleaſed to aſſume the form of Humanity, and (from the height of that incommunicable Excellence which

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immeasurably transcended the most noble created perfection) did vouchsafe to humble himself to so prodigious an abasement, as to invest our Nature, to indue our frailty, and to submit to a meek toleration of those weighty miseries which inseparably attend wretched Mortality. He (by his immaculate conversation, Divine prescriptions, and awful miracles) did justifie himself to be the promised Messiah, and (by the promulgation of his Sacred Gospel) did proclaim a remission of sins to all contrite and repentant Believers. Nor did the vastness of his Love reach to its intended height, till (by the inestimable merit of his inimitable sufferings) he appeased the vengeance of Divine Justice due to our crimes, and became the propitiatory expiation of our offences. And (by his ever-to-be-admired crucifixion) did conquer the formidable Powers of Death and Hell, unbolted the Gates

of

of Heaven, and victoriously perfected the wonderful design of mans Redemption.

After whose glorious Ascension the blessed Apostles did unanimously persevere in the predication of his Gospel, and (by a performance of infinite miracles) did convince the World of the excellency and truth of that new Religion which they so zealously professed. And in the succeeding ages Christianity did so gloriously flourish, that the most inhumane and terrible persecutions (acted by the cruelty of the then Heathen Emperors) did but encrease its Proselytes, and augment its grandeur. The stakes of the Martyrs were the Trophees of the Church, which, like the generous Palm (by a vainly endeavoured suppression) did still arise to a more conspicuous and triumphant an eminence. And though *Greece* and *Asia* (in those times so deservedly famous for the propagation of Literature,

rature, and the primitive divulgation of the Gospel) are now enveloped with clouds of barbarous Mahumetism; and imperious *Rome* so far recedes from those principles of humility she at first professed, as to endeavour an unjust continuation of the universal Monarchy by a tyrannical usurpation over Souls as well as Kingdoms: Yet this happy Nation (by the extraordinary favour of Divine Providence) does enjoy that essential purity of Religion, which (in most of the neighbouring Countries) is lost in a numerous confluence of superstitious and ceremonial Traditions.

And gracious God! since thy ineffable benefits have been so immense to us, vouchsafe, that (by a sincere recognition of thy Love, and a solemn celebration of thy Goodness) we may magnifie thy holy Name for those invaluable emanations of thy Clemency, lest the guilt of our unparallel'd ingra-

titude

titude oblige thee to tranfer that Evangelical Light (which now flames with ſo reſplendent a clarity) to a People utterly unknown to us. And let us continually ennoble our thoughts with the contemplation of that moſt ſublime of Mercies, how the ever-bleſſed Being (whoſe ſole *fiat* ſtretch'd out the boundleſs expanſion of the Heavens, extended the mighty Poles, and fram'd this admirable Fabrick of the Univerſe) did (merely for our redemption) ſhrink into Humanity; how the infinite Creator (to the aſtoniſhment of Angels) was pleaſed to ſuffer for his finite Creatures; and how Life it ſelf did condeſcend to die for the abolition of our offences. And ſeeing nothing but ſo incomparable a ranſom could reprieve us from an inevitable perdition, grant, that we may vigorouſly proſecute (the glorious end of that unſpeakably tranſcendent mercy) the enſurance of

our Salvation. Nor let the regard of momentany pleasures (which either cloy or perish in the fruition) divert our resolutions from the more generous pursuit of those immarcescible satisfactions which await us in the bright Regions of Immortality. But let us aim at nobler objects than this despicable Earth can afford us, and animate our hope with the comfortable expectation of that *fulness of joy*, and immensity of blessedness which (when the World, and all its idolized vanities must expire in Funeral Conflagrations) will (in Heaven) not only create, but perpetuate our Felicity. And that (by a sincere compliance with the Sacred Institutions of Piety) we may so religiously behave our selves in this state of Mortality, that when Death shall come to demand that unavoidable debt which we owe to Nature, we may be prepared to entertain him, and (at the very instant of our dissolution)

may

may breath out our Souls in this paſſionate exclamation:

O that Men would therefore Praiſe the Lord for his Goodneſs, and declare the Wonders which He doth for the Children of Men.

FINIS.